

Committee; Ben Grumbles and Art Chan of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee; Joshua Sheinkman, and Eileen McLellan of Senator WYDEN's staff; Valerie West of Senator SMITH's staff; and former staffers Cynthia Suchman and Martin Kodis.

Mr. CALVERT. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. CALVERT) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, House Resolution 630.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CALVERT. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 4187; S. Con. Res. 145; S. 406; H.R. 4404, as amended; H.R. 1695; H.R. 2570; S. 1705; S. 2917; H.R. 5041; H.R. 4521, as amended; H.R. 5308, as amended; H.R. 4646, as amended; H.R. 3926; H.R. 4312; S. 2102; S. 1936, as amended; S. 1296; H.R. 5398; and H. Res. 630.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

FEDERAL FIREFIGHTER RETIREMENT AGE CORRECTION ACT

Mr. OSE. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 460) to amend title 5, United States Code, to provide that the mandatory separation age for Federal firefighters be made the same as the age that applies with respect to Federal law enforcement officers.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 460

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. MANDATORY SEPARATION AGE FOR FIREFIGHTERS.

(a) CIVIL SERVICE RETIREMENT SYSTEM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The second sentence of section 8335(b) of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(A) by inserting “, firefighter,” after “law enforcement officer”; and

(B) by inserting “, firefighter,” after “that officer”.

(2) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 8335(b) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by striking the first sentence.

(b) FEDERAL EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The second sentence of section 8425(b) of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(A) by inserting “, firefighter,” after “law enforcement officer”; and

(B) by inserting “, firefighter,” after “that officer”.

(2) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 8425(b) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by striking the first sentence.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. OSE) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. OSE).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. OSE. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 460.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. OSE. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the House consider H.R. 460, important legislation introduced by the gentleman from California (Mr. GALLEGLY). This bipartisan legislation amends Federal civil service law relating to the Civil Service Retirement System and the Federal Employees' Retirement System to provide the same mandatory separation age for Federal firefighters and Federal law enforcement officers who have 20 years of service.

Currently, the mandatory separation age is 55 for firefighters and 57 for law enforcement officers. In both cases, an agency head may allow the employees to work until age 60 if that is required by the public interests.

The Subcommittee on Civil Service has examined the legislative history of these mandatory separation ages and the committee determined that there is no rationale for continuing to maintain the discrepancy that currently exists. If enacted, H.R. 460 will bolster our firefighting capabilities allowing these brave men and women the option of continuing their careers for an additional 2 years and will make it easier to maintain more experienced firefighters in the field and in senior management positions.

Madam Speaker, I encourage all Members to support this bill.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, as of early September, more than 6.5 million acres, more than two times the 10-year national average, have burned. Federal manpower resources were spread thin. More than 29,000 people were involved in firefighting efforts, including approximately 2,500 Army soldiers and Marines and fire managers from Canada, Australia, Mexico, and New Zealand. In addition, 1,200 fire engines, 240 helicopters and 50 airtankers were in use this season.

If nothing else, this fire season has taught us that we must take steps to recruit and retain more Federal firefighters. H.R. 460 is a step in that direction.

From the start of the Civil Service Retirement System in 1920 until 1978, all Federal workers were required to retire at age 70, if, at that age, they had completed at least 15 years of service. In 1978, mandatory retirement was repealed for most Federal workers; although, it continues to apply to special occupational groups whose duties pertain to public safety.

Under current law, Federal law enforcement officers must retire at age 57 or as soon after that age as they complete 20 years of service. The agency head may grant exemptions up to age 60. Federal firefighters must retire at age 55 or as soon thereafter as they complete 20 years of service.

H.R. 460 would raise the mandatory retirement age for firefighters to mirror that of Federal law enforcement officers. It would raise the mandatory retirement age of Federal firefighters to that of age 57.

In June, The Washington Post reported a 5.8 percent reduction in the number of firefighters nationwide. H.R. 460 will help stem the declining firefighting population and will help the Federal Government retain some of its most experienced firefighters.

In addition to supporting this legislation, I urge my colleagues to support a bill I introduced last year that will be of equal benefit to the Federal public safety community. In May of last year, I introduced H.R. 1769, the Federal Employees Benefits Equity Act of 1999. This bill works to eliminate a number of inequities found in the computation of benefits for public safety employees under the Federal Employees Retirement System and the Civil Service Retirement System.

Although H.R. 1769, like the bill before us, H.R. 460, would be of tremendous benefit to the firefighter and law enforcement communities and their families, it is yet to be scheduled for floor action.

I look forward to working with the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SCARBOROUGH), chairman of the Subcommittee on Civil Service, and the author of H.R. 460, the gentleman from California (Mr. GALLEGLY), to bring H.R. 1769 to the floor of the House before the end of session.

Madam Speaker, I would be more than remiss if I did not acknowledge the hard work of the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. CAPPS) who worked so diligently with the gentleman from California (Mr. GALLEGLY) to bring H.R. 460 to this floor today.

I thank the gentlewoman and I thank the members of the Committee on Government Reform. I thank the members of the Subcommittee on Civil Service; and I join with my colleagues, with the